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THE LIBRARY AS AN EDUCATIONAL FACTOR¹

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I deem it a high honor, little deserved, to be given a place on this program. I say "little deserved" advisedly, for I am, I may confide to you, taking the place at the last moment of a more worthy representative; and in addition I feel regret that, though I was a teacher for many years and planned and attended many teachers' meetings, in all that time I never spoke, nor heard any other teacher speak, of the place of the library in the scheme of education. In the files of my educational journals gathered in my teaching years I found no plan proposed, nor approval of any plan proposed, by another to bring to the help of the work in hand the mighty forces for aid that lie in every collection of good books. We did not know, and we did not know that we did not know, that libraries are potent factors in education. But today teachers are awakening to that fact, and all around us we see evidences of a new effort and a realization of Dr. Thurber's words:

It is now pedagogic high treason, indeed, to act as if textbooks contained the whole canon of knowledge, and for the teacher to explain everything in advance, and then to expect of the class only to say back what has just been said to them, is to reduce teaching to the lowest depths of imbecility.

One of the chief watchwords today is *correlation*, which is generally understood to mean the adjusting of studies in such a manner that one may help out the other. One of the prominent ideas in educational effort today also is that the responsibility for the training of the future citizen, man or woman, does not rest on the school alone. It is only one of a number that have to do with that problem. Among the influences which aid the development of the child's character are his associates, his home, the church, books, and the school. Is it not an important problem that each shall do

¹ Paper read at the Departmental Conferences, Emmons Blaine Hall, School of Education, Saturday, May 14, 1904.

its own part and do it well? To do this it is necessary to know the full scope of the responsibility—to understand the aids and hindrances, the aims and objects, of the individual influences. To correlate these influences, as far as possible, that one may help out the other in making the child's life a unit, is a considerably higher problem, to my mind, than to determine whether history should precede geography, or geography history, or whether they may not be taught better together than separately. It may seem that the problem is a hard one, but how or where better can it be approached than in a conference of any or all of those concerned in it, or in any part of it? To aid the child in choosing his associates is largely, if not entirely, outside the power of the school; the home and the church are jealous of their rights; but books and their choice belong to the child's mental life, and not only may, but of necessity must, be looked after intelligently by the power that has the general supervision of his mental growth; and this leads to the consideration of the library and its place in any scheme of education.

In considering the library as a factor in education, we look at it here in a threefold view: the library in the school as a necessary piece of its equipment, its place in the normal school, and the public library for all, in school and out.

1. First, as to the school library. This, in its make-up, should be not alone a collection of books, but in every sense a selection of books. Every volume in it should be chosen with a distinct and definite purpose in view. Two classes of use will be provided for—collateral and supplementary reading. The first may be used to further the acquisition of useful knowledge; the latter, to cultivate the habit of reading; to cultivate a taste for that literature which will enrich, refine, and beautify life. It will be made up of what may be called here books of knowledge and books of power. There shall be in this library textbooks—the best of their kind, well written by those who are competent to speak, well illustrated by one or several hands whose artistic skill is undisputed, continually revised, and kept abreast of the advance of knowledge. Further, there shall be reference books, books of facts, handbooks, dictionaries, cyclopedias, and the like. The

school library will have place for pictures, for maps, for lantern slides, for various kinds of illustrative material, with well-directed references where in other libraries and museums these may be supplemented and followed up. This material, too, will need to be selected, not merely collected. As the various subjects are presented, there will be different versions of the same material, expanded, illuminated, related. The child will thus be taught to look into the various authorities at hand, and to know where or when to look further, to think and to weigh for himself; he will be given an incentive to read seriously and with a purpose, and he will from the first learn to turn to books as a delight, not as a task. All this for the collateral reading.

In the supplementary reading will be books of travel, of biography, of discovery, of invention, of description of men and places, of people and powers; books of comparison and measure. When the child is familiar with all these, he will read between the lines of his textbook of a hundred interesting things of which the author has not written one word. The use of these books and material will enrich and enlarge the school course with the glow of romance and the warm touch of life. The choice and use of books by children up to fourteen years of age, when the faculties of reason and analysis are supposed to begin to assert themselves, should come under the province of the school, either directly or in co-operation with the special department for children in the public library. To it the pupil should be accountable for what he reads and how he reads it. From it he should get the advice, the inspiration, the foundation of taste, which will make him a wise and careful reader and prepare him for the freedom of the public library. Under right conditions, he will have developed a knowledge of the simpler tools—indexes, catalogues, etc.—and will have absorbed such a general knowledge of the use of books that the awakened powers of analysis will find ready a fund of book-knowledge that will feed them till they grow self-sustaining. He will know where to find the books he needs for pleasure or profit, and will have become acquainted with the sources of book-distribution provided in the community.

Beyond and more important than the assistance which reading

gives to the work of the school is the formation here of the reading habit. If the child leaves school acquainted with a number of good books and a love for good books, he has a precious possession worth more to him than any study in the curriculum; something that will not only help him in his daily work, but will throw a safeguard about his leisure. The province of the school is to teach a variety of definite things, but its aim, its end, is the development of character. It has been urged that the public school should fit its pupils to earn a living. This demand ignores real education. The aim should be character, not livelihood. It should fit its pupils to live a life, not merely earn a living. A well-lived life always earns a living. The school should teach handicraft to develop the intelligent and moral use of the hand; teach science to place the truth in its proper relation; teach history and geography, not to make commercial travelers, but all these things to enable the pupil to look out over the whole world and see it crowned with life and beauty.

2. And this brings us to the library in the normal school, which may almost be termed, in all truth, the root of the whole matter. It will readily be seen that, to carry out the plans and purposes of the school library to which we have referred, the public-school teacher must understand its plan and appreciate its value. The normal-school library will contain all that the school library should contain, and more. It contains the books that have been written about education, the statistics necessary to comparison, the bibliographies of a multitude of subjects, the reports of the government of the various educational organizations of the leading educational institutions, and all such material as is needed to illustrate the work of the various departments, much of which may seem at first thought to be outside of the scope of a library. In addition, it will have such close relation with museums, and other sources of like character, that it has easy access to what is not expedient to have at hand. No normal school is fully equipped that does not contain a model children's library, chosen and classified with the greatest thought and care, and with which the students must become intelligently familiar before they can in any true sense be authorized to teach.

To normal schools more than to any other agency belongs the duty of teaching the power of the book to those who are going out to teach. The teacher is expected to know how to judge of textbooks, their value and the part they play at certain periods of progress, as well as their place in the study of the subjects they contain. Of equal importance, though unfortunately not so often emphasized, is the knowledge of certain books and their place in the development of character. Horace Mann said: "If a boy read of the friendship of Damon and Pythias, the integrity of Aristides, the perseverance of Franklin, the purity of Washington, he will think differently all the remaining days of his life." That he may be able to make good use of such books as these and others, a teacher should have read and made a part of himself, have read and enjoyed before becoming a teacher, the best of the books that are pronounced children's classics. Only recently I was told of a senior student in a famous school for teachers who asked in the library for Grimm's tales. Is there not a deficiency there that will be a tremendous handicap in understanding the proper food for a child's imagination? Is such a one ready to teach? Then, the wonderfully good books *about* children, but for older people, from which, through the minds of men and women of genius, a better insight into childhood can be gained directly by an ordinary mind. What a tremendous insight one receives through the eyes and mind of Emmy Lou! Those who are to become teachers should have instruction, definite and reliable, as to what books are in the world, how to use them, where they may be obtained, where they are collected, and how they are distributed. This is the information that will be invaluable to them as teachers, as citizens, and as intelligent beings. They should be able to class books in their proper place, whether as tools or as friends. It is necessary to those who essay to use them to know the best tools among books, just as it is in any other calling, and no one will dispute the fact that as intelligent care should be exercised in choosing friends among books as among people.

The normal school training the teacher to go out to teach is the most economical place to have this instruction given. Having the training schools in connection with them, the adaptation of

the books and work to the children can be tested and adjusted at the least cost in time and effort.

3. To come to the third and last view, that of the public library, we may turn to all that is expected of the school library, and of the normal-school library and say: All this it is, and more; with a broader, deeper, and perhaps higher extension, bringing in all humanity, forming indeed in its best examples what Carlyle calls the people's university. In its principle of collecting and distributing information it reaches out to every grade and class of society. It offers to every man, woman, and child in the community, without regard to age, sex, class, religion, or politics, the means of universal self-culture. The voluntary side of the work of the public library gives the individual freedom of action in forming his ideas and standards, and thus does a larger work in a way than a school library. The well-equipped public library has its special librarians—well-educated, broad-minded, sympathetic men and women in touch with every vital force in the community, ready to guide, assist, and teach the children in their own specially equipped department, and to be of service to the student, the specialist, the learned and the untaught, the wise and the foolish, and who, actuated by that indefinable something called the library spirit, are indeed potent factors in the scheme of education. In many cities, if not indeed in most places, there is the closest sympathy between schools of all grades and classes, and every organized educational movement, and the public library.

The school libraries are, in fact, branches of the public library in many places, and the plan is being still more widely adopted all the time. It is believed by many that this plan is a wise one, because, as is set out by Mr. Dana, of Newark, N. J.—an eminent authority on schools and libraries:

With the changes which are occurring in teachers, in methods of teaching, in methods and subjects of study, it is often well to change frequently the books in each room, in part or in whole. This can be done by the public library, if it owns the books. The library also can better look after repairs, binding, selection, purchase, methods of lending, etc., than can any individual teacher, or can any portion of the school machinery. In fact, the ideal condition seems to be that in which the public library, under the general sanction

and supervision of the superintendent, and with constant consultation with individual teachers, extends its system of lending to every schoolroom in the city, making that system as flexible as conditions demand. In sections of the city remote from the main library it includes suitable books for children to take home for their parents as well as for themselves. The public library is the extension of the school system, at public expense, to those who, by reason of age and poverty or stress of whatever kind, may not avail themselves of the school at an earlier period.

Every student within the walls of the library being there voluntarily, no matter what the subject of his research, is adding to the intellectual wealth of the community. Even expensive works of reference consulted by only a few, but these in earnest, are justifiable, because the result of the study, when expressed in products, is the property of the community at large. Preachers, teachers, scientists, mechanics, sociologists, students, every interest of the community represented by a page of print, find a source of helpfulness in this extension and exponent of the school system.

I cannot close this hasty plea for a plan for the library and a wider use of its material so well as by quoting from the eminent English writer, H. G. Wells, who in an article in the *Fortnightly* last year, on "Mankind in the Making," has this to say:

The question of book distribution is as vitally important to the intellectual health of a modern people as are open windows. No nation can live under modern conditions unless its whole population is mentally aerated with books. . . . There was a time when education was conceived of as a matter of learning. Our work now is to broaden both the conception of research and of teaching to recognize that whatever imports fresh and valid aspects, not simply of chemical and physical matters, but of æsthetic, social, and political matters, partakes of the honor and claims of research, and that whatever conveys ideas and aspects socially and clearly and invigoratingly, not simply by words of mouth, but by book or picture or article, is teaching. The whole business of bringing the contemporary book most efficiently home to the general reader, the business of contemporary criticism, the encouragement and support of contemporary writers, is just as vitally important in the modern state as the organization of colleges and schools, and just as little to be left to the enterprise of isolated individuals working primarily upon commercial lines of gain.